

*The Canadian Historical Review*, XXX, 2, June 1949: 144-153.  
KEIRSTEAD, B.S., "Canada and Foreign Affairs"

Gordon O. Rothney

Volume 3, numéro 2, septembre 1949

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/801566ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/801566ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Institut d'histoire de l'Amérique française

ISSN

0035-2357 (imprimé)

1492-1383 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Rothney, G. O. (1949). Compte rendu de [*The Canadian Historical Review*, XXX, 2, June 1949: 144-153. KEIRSTEAD, B.S., "Canada and Foreign Affairs"]. *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 3(2), 283-285.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/801566ar>

*The Canadian Historical Review*, XXX, 2, June 1949: 144-153.  
KEIRSTEAD, B.S., "Canada and Foreign Affairs".

"This is the fifteenth annual article published by the *Canadian Historical Review* on this subject". The author is head of the Department of Economics and Political Science at Mc Gill University, Montreal. His topic is "the cold war". But he does not describe it as a struggle between two nation states, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. "The clash of the power interests and conflicting ambitions of the great nations", he begins by saying, "their trade and economic rivalries, are intensified by the fanaticism of militant religion. I do not think it is putting it too strongly to classify communism as a religion... War as a method of avoiding war, to do evil that good may be accomplished, these are fallacies by no means peculiar to the communists".

On the other side he sees "constitutional liberalism, which can scarcely be called a religion". But Professor Keirstead is very annoyed with "the West" for not being more completely "liberal". "For one thing", he says, "whereas the Roman Catholic Church stands in many lands for the catholic or universalist principles which are common to the Hellenic-Hebraic civilization, in other lands, notably in Spain, this Church has identified itself in a worldly way with the retention of power by a narrow and morally discredited class". Secondly, he complains "the leaders of modern commerce possess vast power and influence and believe that such possession is a kind of virtue, to challenge which must be immoral and wicked".

Just as during the war with Germany and Japan, so in the present "cold war" with the U.S.S.R., we have those who see the conflict, not in terms of what it really is, but in terms of what they would like it to be.

Professor Keirstead seem to be such a person. Naturally, therefore, he is very indignant about the existence of those elements which for him spoil the purity of the clash "between communism and liberal constitutionalism" as he conceives it to exist. In his indignation he slashes out a little wildly: "In my opinion, the non-liberal elements of the West are not very sound allies in the struggle with communism... It is not, perhaps, without significance, that communism in the West has made most of its converts among Roman Catholic populations, or that, on the contrary, some of the most notable reconversions of well-known communist intellectuals have been to the Roman Catholic faith".

Professor Keirstead's implication is that Roman Catholics and communists would change back and forth very easily "so long as they could manage a deal which assured them positions of power". In view of his earlier statement, presumably he thinks this would happen only in those "other lands, notably in Spain", where he said, "this Church has indentified itself", with a "discredited class". So that what he is now saying is that it is among Roman Catholic populations in such "other lands, notably in Spain", that communism in the West has made most of its converts. Where are these "other lands"? Do they include the U.S.A., where "some of the most notable reconversions of well-known communist intellectuals... to the Roman Catholic faith "have occurred? Presumably they do. Presumably, also, Professor Keirstead believes that, in Canada, it would be among French Canadians and in the Province of Quebec that converts to communism would most likely be made.

But the facts do not seem to indicate that all this is true. Tim Buck came to us from "liberal" England. And of the two communists who have turned up in the House of Commons, Mrs. Neilsen also came from "liberal" England, while Fred Rose is a product of the Hebraic (not the Roman Catholic) section of Poland. Karl Marx himself was from an Hebraic and Protestant back-ground in Germany. Lenin and Stalin belonged, not to Roman Catholic communities, but to a country which had a strictly national church. Upon reflection, Professor Keirstead will surely agree that it is unfair to generalize from the case of Spain to the extent of saying "that communism in the West has made most of its converts among Roman Catholic populations". Even if this were true, it would be of no significance compared with the geographic, economic, and social factors involved, and with the effects of war.

After this vigorous and somewhat fanciful statement of his conviction that if "the cold war is to be won by the West it will have to be won by liberalism", and "that the crucial struggle in what we call the cold war is the struggle for men's minds", Professor Keirstead settles down to write an interesting article on the shortcomings of Canadian foreign policy. The

major objective, he says, "must be to prevent the outbreak of another world war... War and defeat create the conditions in which communism flourishes... It is very possible, indeed, that the outbreak of such a war would mean that, whatever the military results, liberal civilization would have reached its end".

Our foreign policy objectives, he continues, are "the maintenance of peace by some long-run achievement of a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet section of the world, and a moral victory over the Soviets which will prevent their further penetration in Europe and Asia by moral and political weapons". This kind of reasoning inevitably leads him to the conclusion that "our first defences lie here at home, and we must insist that those who represent us and speak for us in the councils of nations be inspired by the faith and traditions which are our strength".

Professor Keirstead does not seem to have noticed that the books, pamphlets, and articles which were sent to him for this review included nothing from French Canada. Although he lives in the Province of Quebec, he manages to write this year's article on "Canada and Foreign Affairs" without mentioning a single French-Canadian name, and without including a single French word in his bibliography. This is surely quite remarkable, particularly in view of the fact that so much has been written in French on the subject during the past year. But if he really believes that "it is not, perhaps, without significance, that communism in the West has made most of its converts among Roman Catholic populations", then it is not, perhaps, without significance, either, that Professor Keirstead omits all reference to French-Canadian opinion, — even though the Prime Minister himself is both a French Canadian and a Roman Catholic.

Gordon O. ROTHNEY